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3) Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei)

Prime Minister's schedule, May 17

May 18, 2006

08:43

Arrived at Kantei.

09:23

Attended a Lower House Health, Labor, and Welfare Committee session.

12:33

Saw "life message exhibition" at Lower House No. 2 Diet Members' Office Building.

12:49

Returned to Kantei.

14:08

Met Minshuto lawmaker Yoriyisa Matsuno.

15:00

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Attended party-head debate.

15:53

Met with Secretary General Takebe at LDP headquarters. Afterward attended an election headquarters meeting and a national students exchange lecture meeting.

16:53

Met at Kantei with UN Secretary General Kofi Annan followed by Economic and Fiscal Policy Minister Yosano.

18:29

Dined at the Hotel Okura with Nippon Steel Corp. Honorary Chairman Imai, Toyota Motor Chairman Okuda, and others.

20:44

Returned to his residence.

4) US beef: Experts to reach agreement in principle to resume imports as early as next month; Arrival of goods after inspection by Japan

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 1) (Full)

May 18, 2006

Tokyo and Washington are expected to reach agreement in principle on conditions for resuming US beef imports during today's bilateral experts meeting. The government will likely decide to resume imports before the end of June. Prior inspections of meat processing facilities by Japanese experts need to be conducted once such a decision is made. Because of this procedure, the actual resumption of imports will not take place before the fall.

During yesterday's meeting, the US side explained the details of a report on the results of the re-inspections of its meat-processing plants that are allowed to export products to Japan. The Japanese side proposed having its experts accompany US inspectors on snap inspections and conduct prior inspections of eligible US meat packers, as well as creating rules to deal with problems that might occur after the resumption of imports.

A meeting will also be held today. Since there is no major gap in the views of Tokyo and Washington, the two parties are expected to reach an agreement in principle on conditions for restarting beef trade. Chances are, however, if they fail to work out details, another meeting might be held on the 19th.

The Japanese government plans to hold town meetings later with domestic consumers and importers. It will decide to resume beef imports after completing those sessions. It will take several weeks to complete that process, because such sessions will be held across the nation.

In addition, even if the government decides to import US beef, it

will take more than a month for Japanese officials to inspect all 35 eligible US meat packers. Some have proposed that imports could be started from plants as they undergo prior inspections. However, the Japanese side needs to strengthen its quarantine procedures. Because of this situation, it would take even more time to restart beef trade.

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi is expected to meet with

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President Bush in late June. If consumers conclude that Japan has decided to resume US beef imports under pressure from the US, the move would draw harsh criticism. As such, Tokyo and Washington want to create a system that enables the US to observe import conditions without regard to the prime minister's visit to the US.

5) Bilateral experts meeting: Japan, US heading for agreement next month on importing US beef, boiling down such details now as method of inspection

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Excerpts)  
May 18, 2006

With a meeting of experts from Japan and US on US beef starting yesterday, bilateral talks on restarting imports of US beef have now reached the home stretch. The Japanese and US governments aim to reach agreement during the experts meetings on specific conditions for restarting imports, having in mind the laying of the groundwork for a decision to remove the import ban in June. However, the premise for that decision is there having been no problems with the US' re-inspection of US beef-processing plants. There is also a possibility that detailed discussions could have some left-over issues, such as the method of carrying out inspections (prior inspections) by Japan before the resumption of imports.

6) US stresses safety of its beef during experts' meeting

YOMIURI (Page 9) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

Experts of the governments of Japan and the US met yesterday at the Foreign Ministry to discuss the issue of Japan's re-imposition of a ban on US beef imports, following the discovery in a US beef shipment of a specified risk material (SRM), banned in Japan as a BSE agent.

During the meeting, the US presented a report of several dozen pages on the outcome of its recent re-inspections of meat processing plants authorized to export to Japan and reiterated that there was no possibility of a recurrence. The Japanese delegates sought a continuance of the talks, saying that some US explanations were insufficient.

7) Japanese delegation in experts meeting strongly dissatisfied with US report: "Being at an outline level, the contents are insufficient"

NIHON KEIZAI (Page 5) (Excerpt)  
May 18, 2006

Although the spotlight is on the US report of its re-inspections of US meat-packing facilities, its contents have created a difference in views between the Japanese and US delegates. As a premise for holding the meeting, the report was presented ahead of time, but the contents being in outline form was deemed insufficient, greatly disgruntling the Japanese delegation. The US stresses that the vertical columns found in the beef shipment was "a unique case," and insists that all of its other facilities are safe. The report on the re-inspections backed up its assertion, and the Japanese delegation has been taking an

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extremely cautions position, calling for a careful examination of the report at the meeting. Although the US has been saying it would provide new documents, a Health and Labor Ministry official said, "The contents cannot be clearly said to be convincing." Some officials have pointed out that it may take more time than expected to confirm the data and the like. The meetings are supposed to end on the 18th, but some speculate that they could run over until the 19th.

8) US Senator urges USTR nominee to "be even tougher trade negotiator"

ASAHI (Page 10) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

Kaoru Nishizaki, Washington

During a Senate Finance Committee hearing to confirm the promotion of Susan Schwab, current deputy US trade representative, to be the top US trade negotiator, the Senators urged Schwab to be an even tougher negotiator in order to achieve progress in negotiations with China and Japan. They were reflecting requests coming from their election districts and affected businesses.

In the hearings, one senator, displaying a graph showing the US trade deficit last year as more than 700 billion dollars, said: "As a result of our trade imbalance with China sharply increasing, the US now has a 200-billion dollar trade deficit. Can we say under such circumstances that our trade policy has obtained success?" Pointing out that the US has depended on money coming from Japan and China to cover its trade and fiscal deficits, the senator snapped: "This is unsustainable, a losing strategy."

Many members also called for an early resumption of beef imports to Japan and China. In response, the chairman commented:

"The US government's negotiating stance is overly amiable. I believe your bargaining power is strong, but I expect you to demonstrate a tough stance to Americans and have them feel that the government is doing its best to protect its national interests."

In the 1980s, when Japan-US trade friction intensified, Schwab displayed great ability as the official in charge of legislation for Senator Danforth, known as a hard-liner toward Japan. She also worked for the US Embassy in Tokyo as a trade officer. Schwab said:

"The agricultural negotiations I joined for the first time as an USTR officer were held in Tokyo and they were aimed to make Japan open its market to US beef.... I am determined to devote myself to removing barriers to US exports."

9) Japan positive about airlift support for UN

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi yesterday met at his office with United Nations Secretary General Annan. In the meeting, Annan asked Koizumi to help the United Nations airlift its personnel

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and supplies in connection with Iraq's reconstruction. With this, Annan asked for the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift support. The ASDF currently stations a squadron of transport planes in Kuwait for airlift missions to and from Iraq. Koizumi stressed the importance of working together with the United Nations. "I'd like to consider the request in a positive manner," Koizumi added.

The government will continue ASDF airlift services after withdrawing Ground Self-Defense Force troops currently deployed in Iraq. At the request of Annan, Japan will likely back up the United Nations in addition to its support for US forces.

Touching on Japan's soured relations with South Korea over Koizumi's visits to Yasukuni Shrine, Annan asked Koizumi to improve the two countries' relations. "South Korea has never closed the door, so I want the two countries to talk," Annan said. "I'm optimistic about Japan's relations with South Korea and China," Koizumi replied. "I'm ready to meet with their leaders at any time," he said.

Referring to Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, Annan said the United Nations has yet to fully reform itself. "But," Annan went on, "I still don't think it's dead." He also said, "Most countries recognize it's necessary (to reform the United Nations), so as for the rest, it's a matter of how to get their consensus." Koizumi said, "Japan has been talking with the United States and other countries, and we'd like to continue talks for reform."

Later in the day, Annan met with Foreign Minister Taro Aso in Tokyo. In the meeting, Aso took up Japan's financial contribution to the United Nations. He said, "If our unfair contribution continues, the Japanese people's frustration will be growing." With this, Aso asked Annan to review Japan's contribution rate as proposed by Japan.

10) UN authorizes Japan to expand airlift activities in Iraq

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Abridged)  
May 18, 2006

Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, in his meeting with UN Secretary General Annan yesterday, showed a positive stance in

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response to Annan's request for the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift support for the United Nations. The government, out of consideration for the United States, is planning to expand the scope of ASDF activities after withdrawing Ground Self-Defense Force personnel currently deployed in Iraq. Annan's request was therefore what the government needed.

The government coordinated to begin the GSDF's pullout in April. However, the government has decided to wait until this fall or later due to Iraq's political and security instability. However, the United States is trying to persuade Japan in various ways to stay on in order to prevent a withdrawal domino.

In an aim to obtain the United States' consent, the government mulls expanding the scope of ASDF missions. The government is looking into the possibility of airlifting US military personnel and supplies to Balad and Baghdad in the middle part of Iraq and also to Qatar, where US troops are based.

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However, the ASDF's risk is certain to increase as a consequence of expanding the scope of its activities. A British transport plane, for instance, was shot down near Baghdad. In the case of expanding the scope of ASDF missions, the government could come under fire from the Japanese people.

Annan's request, however, means that the United Nations has authorized Japan to expand the scope of ASDF activities. The government can also justify Japan's backup activities for US forces as helping the United Nations' assistance to Iraq in its reconstruction.

11) ASDF to conduct airlift support for UN in Iraq

SANKEI (Page 1) (Abridged)  
May 18, 2006

The government decided yesterday to expand the Air Self-Defense Force's airlift activities in Iraq and will also conduct airlift support for the United Nations. The ASDF is expected to first airlift UN personnel and supplies to the northern Iraqi city of Arbil. The government deemed it possible to make an appeal on

Japan's continued humanitarian and reconstruction assistance activities in Iraq after recalling Ground Self-Defense Force troops.

UN Secretary General Annan, now visiting Japan, met with Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi at his office yesterday. In the meeting, Annan asked Japan to assist the United Nations in Iraq with ASDF airlift services. Koizumi positively responded to the request.

Meanwhile, the United Nations has asked the Japanese government to help with its establishment of an office in Arbil. In concrete terms, the United Nations would like the ASDF to carry UN personnel and supplies on board its C-130 transports.

The ASDF is expected to fly transport planes from Baghdad or Kuwait to Arbil. The ASDF has sent three C-130s and about 200 personnel on airlift missions to shuttle GSDF supplies between Kuwait and Iraq's southern district. The Defense Agency, deeming it possible for the ASDF to support UN activities, will shortly check a local airport in Arbil.

12) Iranian ambassador tries to discourage Japan from joining sanctions on strength of oil field

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

In a press conference yesterday, Iranian Ambassador to Japan Mohsen Talaie indicated the possibility that Japan would lose the rights it has to exploit the Azadegan oil field if Japan join sanctions against Iran over its nuclear development program in the event of such a measure taken under the lead of the United State. The ambassador said: "Sanction against Iran will turn into sanctions against Japan."

Japan imports 15% of its oil from Iran - the third largest oil supplier to Japan, following Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Japan has now concession rights for 75% of an estimate 26 billion barrels of oil buried in the field, and the field is

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the largest one for Japan's independent development of oil resources. The ambassador said: "Japan should maintain the rights that are vital for its energy security and protect its national interests."

13) Government sets goal to raise independent oil-development rate to 40%

ASAHI (Page 3) (Excerpts)  
May 18, 2006

The government and the ruling camp have decided to nurture Japanese oil majors and raise the ratio of independently developed oil to imports from the current 15% to 40% by 2030. The government had continued to invest in independent oil development through the former Japan National Oil Corporation (JNOC), setting the goal of increasing the independent oil-development rate to 30%. But since the corporation's business performance deteriorated due to failures in its oil development, the government has withdrawn its independent development promotion policy. Given recent oil price hikes, however, the government has decided to revive the policy.

This policy switch was included in an interim report on the nation's comprehensive energy strategy - finalized yesterday by the Liberal Democratic Party's energy strategy panel. The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry will incorporate the policy decision in its report on a new national energy strategy due out by the end of this month.

The interim report noted that amid oil prices skyrocketing, Western countries' oil majors, as well as Chinese and Indian emerging oil businesses have engaged in heated competition for resources development across the world. To counter such

companies, the report suggested the government would provide huge amounts of funds for oil development. It also proposes setting up systems to have government institutions, such as Japan Oil, Gas and Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC), which has taken over the business of JNOC, and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation make investment, guarantee debts, and offer loans.

14) Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda's serene tour of US: Is he looking to robust calls for him to run in presidential race? He remains mum about details of his meetings with key US officials

ASAHI (Page 4) (Excerpts)  
May 18, 2006

Takashi Tominakoshi, Washington

Former Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda completed his itinerary in the United States on May 16, including his meetings with key US government officials, members of Congress, and others. Fukuda, however, remains mum about the details of those meetings, although it is customary for lawmakers to reveal the details of their diplomatic activities overseas. As one of the contenders to succeed Prime Minister Koizumi, Fukuda is drawing wide public attention, following Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe. This is perhaps because the public pins hopes on Fukuda's diplomatic skills. Although he is well aware of such expectations, Fukuda appears unwilling at present to make himself

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seen as being eager (for the Liberal Democratic Party presidency).

Fukuda arrived in Washington DC on May 10 and met successively with the three top administration leaders - Vice President Cheney, Secretary of State Rice, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld - and members of Congress. These three leaders also since last year have met with other post-Koizumi contenders, including Abe, Foreign Minister Aso, and Finance Minister Tanigaki.

Former US Ambassador to Japan Baker, an old friend of Fukuda, took the trouble to make arrangements for Fukuda's meetings with US officials. The reason why Rice and other administration leaders agreed to meet with Fukuda, who is not a cabinet member, is perhaps because they have a high opinion of Fukuda's stance of aiming to improve relations with China and South Korea. Also, the realization of meetings between them and Fukuda is viewed as a manifestation of their expectations of Fukuda as a prime ministerial candidate to succeed Koizumi.

When asked about details of his talks with US leaders by reporters, Fukuda repeatedly said, "We talked about all sorts of things." In addition to this remark, on May 16 Fukuda offered his impression: "I spent meaningful time here. I think it is important to keep this (good Japan-US) relationship in shape in the future as well." A senior member of the Mori faction to which Fukuda belongs explained: "Fukuda's judgment is that it is unwise to highlight the fruits of his US tour now because doing so would be taken as an expression of his desire to succeed Mr. Koizumi."

Yet, Fukuda seems happy to hear about the rise in his popularity in polls conducted in Japan while he was in the US. In a meeting with an official in charge of economic affairs, Fukuda reportedly said: "The presidential race depends on momentum."

15) Mindan ends assistance to North Korean defectors this month, giving consideration to Chongryon, causing internal criticism

YOMIURI (Page 2) (Abridged)  
May 18, 2006

The Korean Residents Union in Japan (Mindan) yesterday announced reconciliation with the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (Chongryon). In this connection, it was learned that activities by Mindan's North Korean Defectors Assistance Center have been suspended. The pro-Seoul organization said that in



order to facilitate the reconciliation process, it gave consideration to Chongryon, which had been critical of its assistance for North Korean escapees. However, some Mindan members are critical of the move, which has just put the issue on the back burner. Whether the statement issued yesterday will lead to true reconciliation is unclear.

Former North Korean residents in Japan returned to their home country, following the repatriation project, but many of them have fled to Japan since the mid-1990s after suffering persecution in North Korea. The center was established in June 2003 in order to accept those returnees. The repatriation project was carried out from 1959 to 1984. Chongryon promoted the project, touting North Korea as a paradise.

At present, approximately 100 North Korean defectors live in

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Japan, of whom about 70 are receiving assistance from the center, including job placement services and welfare benefits until they receive social security benefits. Some Chongryon members had been critical of these activities, claiming that such activities assist criminals who have illegally escaped from North Korea. Chongryon has reportedly expressed displeasure with the center's activities.

The center suddenly suspended its activities early this month. Mindan said that the suspension was temporary, stating that it made the decision from an overall perspective, including consideration to Chongryon.

16) Government to postpone cabinet decision on US force realignment until after May 27 out of consideration to Okinawa

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

The government decided yesterday to postpone a cabinet decision on a US force realignment implementation plan until after the Pacific Islands Summit to be held in Okinawa on May 26-27, attended by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. The government originally planned to make a cabinet decision on May 23. The postponement reflects the government's consideration for Gov. Keiichi Inamine, who has reservations about a cabinet decision before the summit.

The government sent Cabinet Office and Defense Agency officials in charge to Okinawa yesterday to confirm Inamine's wishes. The governor expressed his opposition to a cabinet decision ahead of the summit, saying, "I will explain things to the Okinawa public in stages. I need time." Inamine also called for the swift establishment of a panel for the government and Okinawa to discuss local economic stimulus measures and other matters.

17) Party-head debate: Koizumi refers to Ozawa's book in defending ruling bloc's action, Ozawa argues people can change with reason

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Excerpts)  
May 18, 2006

One-on-one Diet debate took place yesterday between Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Minshuto (Democratic Party of Japan) President Ichiro Ozawa with a focus on education. Reversing the usual pattern of the opposition bloc fiercely pursuing the prime minister and the premier fighting back defiantly, the two leaders exchanged views calmly yesterday while sticking to their guns in a quiet atmosphere with no booing and heckling. Although the debate lacked heat, the two leaders fully exhibited their characteristics.

At the outset of his debate with Koizumi, Ozawa politely referred to the fact that the ruling block railroaded a medical reform bill through the Lower House Health, Labor, and Welfare Committee earlier in the day. Ozawa criticized the act, saying, "The opposition bloc asked for more time for discussion. The ruling

coalition should have a large heart to comply with it."

In response, Koizumi said, "I agree with you." But he immediately broached a passage in Ozawa's book Blueprint for a New Japan to

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defend the ruling bloc's action, saying, "It's not right to give in to only a few spoiled brats." Koizumi also indicated that he had read Ozawa's book to learn his views. Ozawa retorted, "How could you say that you agree with me just after railroading the bill?"

The remaining time was devoted to educational issues. Ozawa asked, "Who is basically responsible for education?" Koizumi replied "parents" without hesitation to underline the importance of education at home, adding: "Education begins with parents making their children feel loved in early childhood. Parents should hold their children tightly, put them down, and let them walk. This is more important than any law, and this is what parents should do in raising children."

18) Prime Minister Koizumi likely to express support for successor "at the end of August or September"

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)  
May 18, 2006

Prime Minister Koizumi late yesterday dined with Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren) Chairman Hiroshi Okuda and others in Tokyo, and speaking of the upcoming Liberal Democratic Party presidential election set for September, he told them: "I'll make my position clear when (who will run in the presidential race) is made clear in late August or September." This remark was taken as an expression of his willingness to back a potential successor. A participant in the gathering revealed this information.  
DONOVAN